

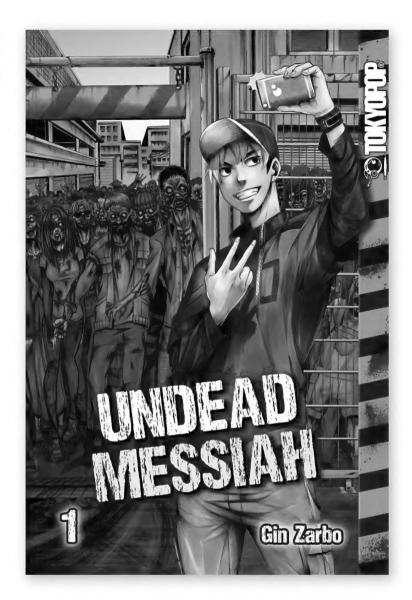
STOP

THIS IS THE BACK OF THE BOOK!

How do you read manga-style? It's simple! Let's practice -- just start in the top right panel and follow the numbers below!



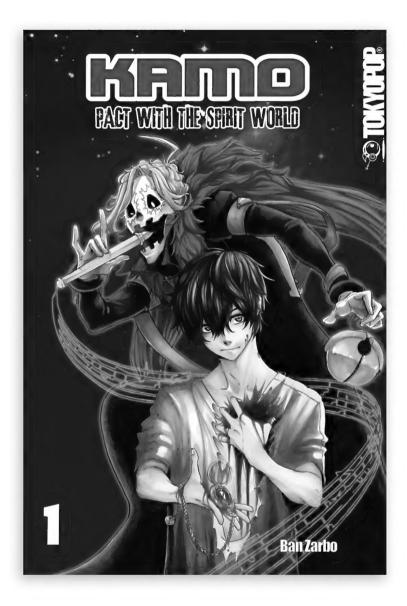
Crimson from Kamo / Fairy Cat from Grimms Manga Tales Morrey from Goldfisch / Princess Ai from Princess Ai



ACTION



A pregnant woman is pursued by a supernatural creature. On the internet, videos of a bandaged hero surface. 15-year-old Tim Muley makes a terrible discovery in his neighbor's garden. Three seemingly unrelated events, all of which seem to point to an imminent zombie apocalypse! But this time the story's not about the end of mankind; it's about a new beginning...



FANTASY

Born with a failing heart, Kamo has fought death his whole life, but to no avail. As his body weakens and he readies to draw his final breath, he's visited by a powerful spirit named Crimson who offers him a deal: defeat and capture the souls of twelve spirits in exchange for a new heart. It seems too good to be true... and maybe it is.



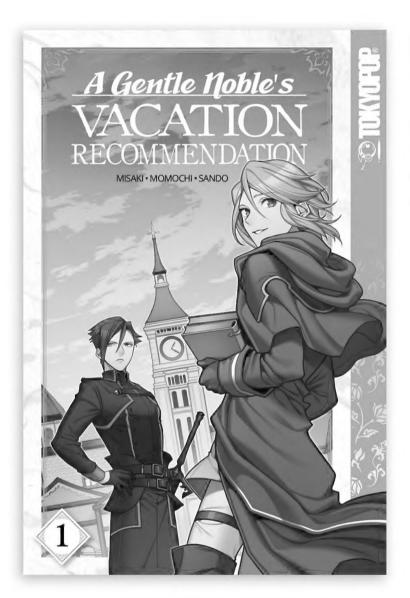
A pact with the spirit world... what could possibly go wrong?



SUPERNATURAL



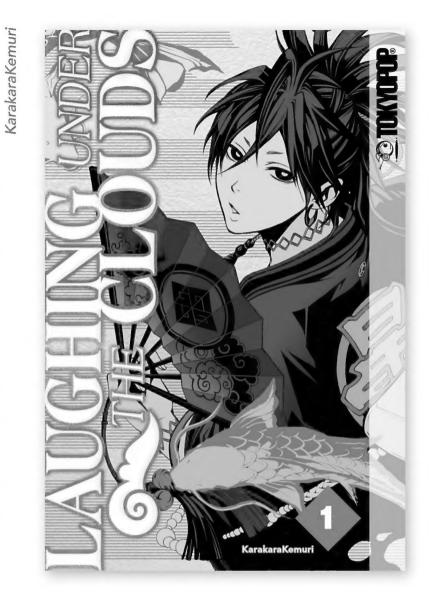
Yamagishi and Sendo are schoolmates, but that's about all they have in common: one is a down-to-earth guy in the boxing club, while the other is a brainy, bookish conspiracy nut. But when they stumble across something weird and inexplicable after class one evening, it seems they'll have to set their differences aside in order to uncover the truth behind the mysterious creatures and strange figure prowling the school grounds.



ADVENTURE

When Lizel finds himself in a city that bears odd similarities to his own but clearly isn't, he quickly comes to terms with the unlikely truth: this is an entirely different world. Even so, laid-back Lizel isn't the type to panic. He sets out to learn more about this strange place, and to help him do so, hires a seasoned adventurer named Gil as his guide and protector. Until he's able to find a way home, Lizel figures this is a perfect opportunity to explore a new way of life adventuring as part of a guild. Might as well enjoy the otherworldly vacation for now!





FANTASY



In the early Meiji era, against civil unrest and the end of the samurai way of life, Japan's crime rate skyrocketed. As prisons overflow, the government has no choice but to build a new, inescapable prison. This prison is Gokumonjo, located in the center of Lake Biwa, which means it relies on the three sons of the Kumo family to transport criminals to it. But is Gokumonjo truly just a prison for petty criminals...?



ACTION

Not long before the exploits of Eivor Wolf-Kissed, Jarl Stensson and his sons, Ulf and Björn, make their way to England at the behest of Halfdan Ragnarsson and Ivarr the Boneless. Filled with excitement, confidence and bloodlust, the two brothers are eager to go to war against Aelfred the Great and his Anglo Saxon army. But they would do well not to underestimate what awaits them on those green shores...





AN LUSHAN AND GAO LISHI



IT IS A HISTORICAL FACT THAT XUANZONG HAD HOPED TO PROMOTE AN LUSHAN TO BE AN OFFICIAL, AND EVEN A CHANCELLOR, BUT ULTIMATELY DID NOT DO SO DUE TO YANG GUOZHONG'S OPPOSITION. A COURTIER SECRETLY CONVEYED THIS TO AN LUSHAN, AND AN LUSHAN WAS GREATLY DISPLEASED. THE EUNUCH GAO LISHI WAS ORDERED TO SEND OFF AN LUSHAN DURING HIS DEPARTURE FROM CHANG'AN AND BECAME AWARE OF THIS.



*THE EMPEROR HOPED TO PROMOTE AN LUSHAN TO THE RANK OF AN OFFICIAL AND HAD ALREADY WRITTEN THE BPICT FOR IT. HOWEVER, YANG GUCZHONG SAID TO HIM, YAN LUSHAN HAS SERVED WELL AS A MILITARY MAN, BUT HE IS ILLITERATE. HOW CAN HE BE CHANCELLOR? IF YOU LET THIS COME TO PASS, THE TANG DYNASTY WILL BE BELITTLED BY THE OTHER NATIONS. AS A RESULT, THE EMPEROR RELUCTANTLY OVERWROTE HIS INITIAL INTENTIONS. ON THE DAY OF YIGH, THE EMPEROR BESTOWED LUSHAN THE TITLE OF RIGHT CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR, AS WELL AS REWARDING ONE OF HIS SONS WITH THE POST OF A THIRD RANKING OFFICIAL, AND ANOTHER WITH THE POST OF A FOURTH RANKING OFFICIAL."

- COMPREHENSIVE MIRROR IN AID OF GOVERNANCE

"WHEN LUSHAN LEFT CHANG'AN, THE EMPEROR ORDERED GAO LISHI TO SEND HIM OFF UP TO CHANGLE HILL. UPON GAO LISHI'S RETURN, THE EMPEROR ASKED, WAS AN LUSHAN SATISFIED?" GAO LISHI REPLIED, "I SAW THAT HE DID NOT SEEM PLEASED, HE MUST KNOW THE REASON THAT THE PLAN TO MAKE HIM CHANCELLOR WAS QUASHED! THE EMPEROR INFORMED GUOZHONG, WHO SAID, "THIS PLAN WAS NOT KNOWN TO OTHERS, SO IT MUST HAVE BEEN ZHANG JI AND HIS BROTHERS WHO INFORMED HIM OF IT! ENRAGED, THE EMPEROR DEMOTED ZHANG JUN TO GOVERNOR OF JIAN'AN, ZHANG JI TO MARSHAL OF LUXI, AND JI'S YOUNGER BROTHER, IMPERIAL ATTENDANT CHU, TO MARSHAL OF LUXI, AND JI'S YOUNGER BROTHER, IMPERIAL ATTENDANT CHU, TO MARSHAL OF YICHUN."

- COMPREHENSIVE MIRROR IN AID OF GOVERNANCE

*Hence, Lushan was intimidated and used the excuse of killing guozhong to rally the troops."

- OLD BOOK OF TANG, BIOGRAPHIES FIFTY-SIX: YANG GUOZHONG





GOLDEN TURTLES

IN THE NINTH MONTH OF THE FIRST YEAR OF WUDE UNDER GAOZU'S RULE, THE OFFICIAL TOKEN OF AUTHORITY, THE SILVER RABBIT, WAS CHANGED TO THE SILVER FISH. IN THE FIFTH MONTH OF THE SECOND YEAR OF YONGHUI, UNDER GAOZONG'S RULE, TOP-RANK OFFICIALS, OFFICIALS OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT BOTH MILITARY AND CIVIL, FOURTH- AND FIFTH-RANK OFFICIALS, WERE ALL TO CARRY THE FISH ON THEIR PERSON. IN THE FIFTH MONTH OF THE THIRD YEAR OF XIANHEAG, OFFICIALS OF THE FIFTH RANK AND ABOVE WERE NEWLY BESTOWED FISH BROCADES, DECORATED WITH SILVER. THIRD-RANK OFFICIALS AND ABOVE WERE EACH BESTOWED GILDED BLADES AND WHETSTONES. IN THE FIRST MONTH OF THE SECOND YEAR OF CHUIGONG, COMMANDERS AND REGIONAL INSPECTORS OF ALL PREFECTURES WERE TO CARRY FISH BROCADES ALONG WITH CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

IN THE NINTH MONTH OF THE FIRST YEAR OF TIANSHOU, THE FISH TOKENS WERE CHANGED TO TURTLES.
IN THE TENTH MONTH OF THE FIRST YEAR OF JUSHI, THIRD-RANK OFFICIALS AND ABOVE CARRIED TURTLE
SACHETS WITH GOLD ORNAMENTATION, FOURTH-RANK OFFICIALS USED SILVER, AND FIFTH-RANK OFFICIALS
COPPER.

IN THE SECOND MONTH OF THE FIRST YEAR OF SHENLONG, OFFICIALS OF THE FIFTH RANK AND ABOVE, WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, BORE THE FISH BROCADE AS BEFORE. IN THE SIXTH MONTH, REGIONAL AND HEREDITARY LORDS WERE ALLOWED TO BEAR GOLDEN FISH BROCADES. IN THE EIGHTH MONTH OF THE THIRD YEAR OF JINGLONG, SPECIAL PERMISSION WAS REEDED TO BEAR THE FISH. THE SPECIAL BENEFITS OF BEARING THE FISH BEGAN, STARTING IN THE WIDE ERA, ALL OFFICIALS, FISH. THE SPECIAL BENEFITS OF BEARING THE FISH BEGAN. STARTING IN THE WUDE ERA, ALL OFFICIALS, FROM THE WATCHTOWER GUARDS UPWARDS, WOULD CARRY THE FISH BROCADE. FROM ZETIAN AND ZHONGZONG'S TIME ONWARD, SUPERVISORS AND INSPECTORS, THOSE WHO WERE NOT OFFICIALS, WOULD NOT CARRY THE FISH. THOUGH OFFICIALS CARRIED THEM, THEY WOULD GIVE THEM UP UPON RETIREMENT OR REMOVAL FROM OFFICE. THIS LASTED UNTIL THE NINTH YEAR OF KAIYUAN, WHEN ZHANG JIAZHEN IN HIS POSITION AS ZHONGSHU ORDERED THAT ALL RETIREES MAY CARRY THE FISH WITH THEM TILL THE END OF THEIR LIVES, AS A SYMBOL OF PRIDE AND FAVOR. THOSE WHO WERE REMOVED FROM OFFICE FOR ADEQUATE REASONS WERE ALSO ALLOWED TO WEAR THE FISH BROCADE. SINCE THOSE OF MERIT WERE GIVEN ROBES OF RED AND PURPLE, ALONG WITH THE FISH BROCADE, AS FORMAL DRESS, MANY CARRIED THE FISH BROCADE AND WORE ROBES OF CINNABAR AND PURPLE.

in old book of tang, scroll forty-five, chronicle twenty-five; rites of dressing

OFFICIALS IN THE TANG DYNASTY USED FISH-EMBROIDERED SACHETS AS A TOKEN TO IDENTIFY THEIR AUTHORITY. THE FISH TOKEN WAS CHANGED TO A TURTLE TOKEN UNDER WU ZETIAN'S RULE, THEN CHANGED BACK TO A FISH TOKEN WHEN ZHONGZONG RETURNED TO THE THRONE. WITH THE END OF WU ZETIAN'S RULE, THE TURTLE TOKEN'S AUTHORITY WAS ALSO ABOLISHED AFTER FIVE BRIEF YEARS. NEVERTHELESS, GOLDEN TURTLES ENDURED AS A SYMBOL OF NOBILITY, GIVING BIRTH TO THE SAYING "GOLDEN-TURTLE SON-IN-LAW", IN REFERENCE TO WEALTHY SON-IN-LAWS.

FIFTY YEARS LATER, "THE GOLDEN TURTLES" WAS THE NAME OF A SECRET IMPERIAL ORGANIZATION.



YAN JIMING

YAN JIMING WAS THE THIRD SON OF CHANGSHAN COMMANDER YAN GAOQING. HE WAS ALSO THE NEPHEW OF RENOWNED CALLIGRAPHER YAN ZHENQING.

"YAN GAOQING, OF LINYI IN LANGYA. HE WAS A HEREDITARY OFFICIAL, UPRIGHT AND CAPABLE. IN THE FOURTEENTH YEAR OF TIANBAO, HE WAS GIVEN THE POSITION OF CHANGSHAN COMMANDER."

- OLD BOOK OF TANG, SCROLL ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SEVEN, ONE OF TWO, BIOGRAPHIES ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SEVEN: YAN GAOQING

"YAN GAOGING, COURTESY NAME XIN, WAS RELATED TO ZHENGING UNTO THE FIFTH DEGREE, AND DESCENDED FROM A SCHOLARLY FAMILY. HE WAS UPRIGHT AND CARRIED OUT HIS DUTIES IRREPROACHABLY. ONCE QUESTIONED BY A REGIONAL INSPECTOR, HE WAS ESPECIALLY FRANK AND UNBENDING. IN THE ERA OF KAIYUAN, HE AND HIS BROTHERS CHUNGING AND YAOGING HAD EXTRAORDINARY PENMANSHIP AND LITERARY TALENT, CAUSING XI YU, THE ASSISTANT MINISTER OF APPOINTMENTS, TO SIGH IN ADMIRATION. HENCE, HE WAS PROMOTED TO THE POSITION OF REGISTRAR IN THE COUNTY OF FANYANG. HEARING OF HIM, AN LUSHAN PROPOSED FOR HIM TO TAKE THE ROLE OF MILITARY MAGISTRATE AND DESIGNATED GOVERNOR OF CHANGSHAN.

🖦 NEW BOOK OF TANG, SCROLL ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY-TWO, BLOGRAPHIES ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTBEN: YAN GAOGING



THERE ARE NO RECORDS OF LIE IN HISTORY. HOWEVER, IN THE RECORDS OF YAN ZHENQING, HE WAS BRIEFLY NOTED AS A VISITOR FROM QINGHE.

YANG GUOZHONG'S POWER

THE POLITICALLY AMBITIOUS YANG GUOZHONG HAD A DEEP HATRED TOWARDS AN LUSHAN. DURING AN LUSHAN'S FINAL VISIT TO THE IMPERIAL COURT, THEIR CONFLICT FINALLY EXPLODED.

GUOZHONG WAS COLD AND NEUROTIC. HIS STRENGTH WAS HIS WAY WITH WORDS, THIS SKILL WON HIM THE POSITION OF CHANCELLOR. HE HANDLED CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS DECISIVELY, WITHOUT A SHADOW OF DOUBT. IN COURT, WITH A SHAKE OF HIS SLEEVES AND A TURN OF HIS WRISTS, HE WOULD ORDER THE OFFICIALS BELOW HIM ABOUT. ALL WERE AFRAID OF HIM.

HIM ABOUT. ALL WERE AFRAID OF HIM.

AT THE TIME, AN LUSHAN RECEIVED GREAT FAVOR FROM THE EMPEROR, HOLDING MILITARY POWER. GUOZHONG KNEW HE WAS PRIDEFUL, AND DID NOT OVERSTEP BEFORE HIM, DECIDING INSTEAD TO TELL THE EMPEROR AGAIN AND AGAIN OF HIS REBELLIOUS NATURE. THE EMPEROR DID NOT BELIEVE HIM. THIS TIME, LUSHAN HAD ALREADY BETABLISHED HIS AUTHORITY IN HEBEI, RIDING OUT TO GATHER TROOPS IN YOUZHOU IN PREPARATION TO REVOLT, THOUGH THE REASON WAS STILL UNCLEAR, AFTER WISHING THE EMPEROR LONGEVITY AT THE QUANQIU FESTIVAL, HE WAS FURIOUS AND DOMINEERING, SEEING THAT GUCKHOM HAD CONTROL AND THINKING THAT THINGS WERE NOT IN HIS FANOR, LUSHAN TOON ON THE ROLE OF HEAD OF THE IMPERIAL STABLES FROM AFAR, PLACING MILITARY MINISTER JI WEN IN THE POSITION OF THE PROYISIONAL GOVERNOR AND IMPERIAL CENSOR WHILE GATHERING INFORMATION IN AND AROUND THE CAPITAL TO UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION IN THE IMPERIAL COURT SUCKHOMS SERT AFFAIRS, SURROUNDING HIS HOME. LUSHAN'S SECRET AFFAIRS, SURROUNDING HIS HOME. THEY FOUND THAT IL HAD, AN DAI AND OTHERS, AND HAD THE IMPERIAL OFFICIAL ZHENG ANG SENTENCE THEM TO DEATH BY STRANGULATION, HE APPEALED TO NAVE JI WEN DEMOTED TO HEPU, ENRAGING LUSHAN, HAVING SUCCESSFULLY PROVOKED LUSHAN, HE ATTEMPTED TO OBTAIN THE EMPEROR'S TRUST ON THIS, BUT THE EMPERO

— OLD BOOK OF TANG, BIOGRAPHIES FIFTY-SIX: LI LINFU, YANG GUOZHONG



YANG GUOZHONG MOBILIZES THE YÜLIN IMPERIAL GUARDS

[WANG] HAN'S GOOP FRIEND XING ZAI PLANNED TO KILL THE LONGWU GENERAL WITH THE LONGWU TROOPS, CAUSING THE TROOPS TO REVOLT AND CALL FOR THE PEATH OF LI LINFU, CHEN XILIE AND YANG GUIZHOMG. THIS WAS LEAKED TWO DAYS BEFORE THE INCIDENT IN SUMMER, ON THE DAY OF YIVOU IN THE FOURTH MONTH, AT COURT, THIS REPORT. WAS READ TO [WANG] HONG, WITH A WARRANT FOR HIS ARREST, THINKING HAN WAS WITH ZAI, HONG SENT SOMEONE TO SUMMON HIM. LATE IN THE DAY HE ORDERED JIA JILIN TO ARREST ZAI. ZAI LIVED IN JINCHENGFANG. WHEN JILIN AND HIS MEN REACHED, ZAI AND HIS MEN TEN PEOPLE, SUDDENLY ATTACKED WITH BLADES AND BOWS, HONG AND YANG GUOZHONG LED THE TROOPS THERE. XING'S GUARD WARNED, "YOU ARE NOT TO HARM LORD WANG AND HIS MEN." YANG GUOZHONG'S GUARD TOLD HIM IN SECRET, "THESE TRAITORS ARE SPEAKING IN COPE. DO NOT CROSS SWORDS WITH THEM." XING FOUGHT HIS WAY OUT TO THE SOUTH WEST OF THE IMPERIAL CITY.

- COMPREHENSIVE MIRROR IN AID OF GOVERNANCE; XUANZONG, ELEVENTH YEAR OF TIANBAC



YANG GUOZHONG'S NEPOTISM

SPRING, THE FIRST MONTH, THE DAY OF RENXU, GUOZHONG SUMMONED THE RIGHT CHANCELLOR CHEN KILLE, THE JISHICHONG, AND ALL OTHER MINISTERS TO BE GATHERED AT THE DOCUMENTS OFFICE TO DECIDE ON POTENTIAL CAMPIDATES, ONLY A DAY WAS NEEDED TO REACH A CONCLUSION, HE SAID, "SINCE THE RIGHT CHANCELLOR AND GEI SHI ZHONG ARE BOTH PRESENT, WE CAN ASSUME WE HAVE ALREADY PASSED THE INSPECTION OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS," THE CAMPIDATES SELECTED HAD A LARGE DISPARITY IN THEIR CAPABILITIES, BUT NONE DARED TO OFFER THEIR OPINION.

— COMPREHENSIVE MIRROR IN AID OF GOVERNANCE, SCROLL TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTEEN: RECORDS OF TANG, THIRTY-TWO, XUAN ZONG, TWELFTH YEAR OF TIANBAO



AN LUSHAN'S REWARDS

"ON THE DAY OF YISI, AN LUSHAN WILL BE BESTOWED THE TITLE OF RIGHT CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR, WITH GOVERNANCE OVER A THOUSAND FACTIONS OF SERVANTS, A MANOR, AND A MANSION; WITH AN ADDITION OF GOVERNANCE OVER THE XIANJIU, WU FANG EUNUCHS, IMPERIAL GARDEN, THE REGION OF LONGYOU, AS WELL AS HAVING DEPUTY MINISTER OF THE MILITARY TO BE HIS VICE GOVERNOR, HE IS TO RETURN TO THE CAPITAL ON THE DAY OF BINGWU, ON THE DAY OF GUIYOU OF THE SECOND MONTH, HE IS TO ATTEND THE IMPERIAL COURT AT DAQING PALACE, BY THE ORDERS OF THE EMPEROR, THE MILITARY THE GREAT AND HEAVENLY ANCESTOR OF THE LANDS."

DOLD BOOK OF TANG, BOOK NINE; XUANZONG, TWO OF TWO



"THE DAY OF YIHAI, THE EMPEROR VISITED XINGQING COURT TO BE NAMED, THE PUNISHMENT FOR ONE OF HIS OFFICIALS HAD BEEN PARDONED, AND HE WAS SENT BACK TO HIS HOME UPON NEWS OF HIS PARENTS! PASSING. THE EXISTING TITLES OF WISHIJ HAD BEEN CHANGED TO WITHII, THE GOVERNORS AND OFFICIALS WERE RAISED A TITLE. ALL THIRD RAINKING MILITIARY AND SCHOLARLY OFFICIALS WERE ALSO ABLE TO MOVE BY RAINK IN FORM OFFICIALS TO MOVE UP A TIER. A FEAST WAS HELD FOR THREE DAYS. THE DAY OF WIYAN, THE TITLE OF CHANCELLOR, MINISTER OF CIVIL AFFAIRS, AND MINISTER OF LAND AND SEA WAS BESTIOWED ON YANG SUCKING, WITH NO FIRTHER CHANGES IN THE OTHER OFFICIAL POSTS, ON THE DAY OF JIASHEN, YANG GUOZHONG WAS GIVEN HIS TITLES AND THE SKY POURED DOWN HEAVILY, DRENCHING THE ROBES OF ALL. BEFORE COMING TO THE IMPERIAL COURT, AN USHAN HAD LED THE MILITARY EXPEDITION AND SPRING AN ATTACK ON THE KITHAN, BARNING RECOGNITION AS A WORTHY GENERAL. HE REQUESTED FOR MORE MEN THAN HE WAS ASSIGNED, AND CONTINUED TO DESIRE FOR A PROPER WRITTEN APPOINTMENT OFFICE. AS A RESULT, HE WAS REWARDED WITH MORE THAN HE ASKED FOR, WITH FIVE HUNDRED GENERALS AND TWO THOUSAND COMMANDERS."

— OLD BOOK OF TANG, BOOK NINE: XUANG ZONG, PART TWO OF TWO

"ON THE DAY OF JICHOU, AN LUSHAN EXCLAIMED, 'A NUMBER OF MY SOLDERS WILL BE TRAVELING TO XI, KITHAN, JUXING, TONGLUO AND MORE, WHICH LEAVES THEM IN THE PATH OF DANGER, BEYOND WHAT THEY ARE USED TO, IT WOULD BE BEST IF THEY WERE GIVEN AN IMPERIAL AMULET FOR THEIR EASY TRAVELS.' HIS WORDS EARNED THIS HONOR FOR HIS FIVE HUNDRED GENERALS AND TWO THOUSAND COMMANDERS, LUSHAN WAS PLANNING A REBELLION AND THIS HELPED HIM WIN THE HEARTS OF MANY."

COMPREHENSIVE MIRROR IN AID OF GOVERNANCE: TANG RECORDS, THIRTY-THREE



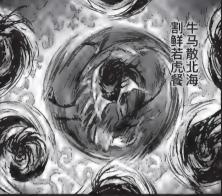
"THE THIRD MONTH, THE BEGINNING OF THE DAY OF DINGYOU, LUSHAN RETURNED TO FANYANG. THE EMPEROR OFFERED HIM HIS ROBES AS A REWARD, DELIGHTING THE SURPRISED LUSHAN."

> - COMPREHENSIVE MIRROR IN AID OF GOVERNANCE: TANG RECORDS, THIRTY-THREE

AN LUSHAN AND THE SOGDIAN WHIRL

HISTORICAL RECORDS STATE THAT AN LUSHAN HAD A STOUT BUILD AND OFTEN NEEDED OTHERS TO SUPPORT HIM AS HE WALKED. HOWEVER, WHEN HE PERFORMED THE SOGDIAN WHIRL, HE WOULD BE MAGNIFICENT LIKE THE WIND. THE DANCE HE PERFORMED DURING THE BANQUET IS NOT TYPICALLY AN INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE, BUT IS USUALLY ACCOMPANIED BY A GROUP OF FEMALE DANCERS.





"IN HIS LATER YEARS, HE WOULD BE OF A STAUNCH BUILT, WITH A BELLY HANGING PAST HIS KNEES. AT A WEIGHT OF THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTY JIN, HE WOULD NEED TO BE LIFTED FROM HIS ARMS ON BOTH THE LEFT AND RIGHT TO BE ABLE TO WALK, AND EVERY STEP REQUIRED EFFORT. BEFORE XUANZONG, HIS PERFORMANCE OF THE SOGDIAN WHIRL WOULD BE A ROBUST AND BREATH-TAKING SIGHT."

- OLD BOOK OF TANG, BIOGRAPHIES ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY: AN LUSHAN



XUANZONG'S JIEGU

HISTORICAL RECORDS STATE THAT XUANZONG HAD AN EXCELLENT UNDERSTANDING OF MUSICAL RHYTHM, AND WAS ESPECIALLY GOOD WITH THE JIEGU (WETHER DRUM).

THE JIEGU LOOKED SIMILAR TO A BUCKET, AND COULD BE PLAYED BY DRUMMING WITH BOTH HANDS. IT ORIGINATED FROM THE JIE TRIBE AND WAS HENCE TERMED THE JIEGU. IT CAN ALSO BE PLAYED WITH TWO STICKS."

- OLD BOOK OF TANG: MUSIC, TWO

"YUANZONG, WHO WAS VERSED IN MUSICAL RHYTHM AND HAD A DEEP LOVE FOR DHARMIC SONGS, ESTABLISHED THE PEAR GAZDEN TO TRAIN THREE HINDRED PERFORMERS. THE EMPEROR WOULD CORRECT ANY MISTAKES HE NOTICED, AND HENCE THEY WERE CALLED THE "EMPEROR'S DISCIPLES AT THE PEAR GAZDEN." THERE WERE A HUNDRED PALACE MAIDS WHO WERE ALSO PART OF THE PEAR GAZDEN DISCIPLES, AND THEY RESIDED IN THE YICHUN NORTH YARD. THERE WERE ONLY THIRTY SINGERS WHO FORMED A SMALL MUSICAL GROUP DEVOTED TO THE PRACTICE OF FA MUSIC AT THE PEAR GAZDEN. IMPRESSED BY MOUNT LI, THE EMPEROR ORDERED THIS MUSICAL GROUP TO PERFORM AT THE IMPERIAL COURT ON YANG GUIFE'S BIRTHDAY. THE NEW SONG THAT THEY PERFORMED HAD YET TO BE WELL KNOWN TO OTHERS, BUT BECAUSE OF THE LYCHEES BROUGHT IN FROM THE NORTH, WOULD BE TITLED, "FRAGRANCE OF LYCHEES." THE EMPEROR WAS ALSO FOND OF THE JIEGU, AND THE PRINCE OF NING ENLOYED PLAYING THE SIDE-BLOWN FLUTE. UNDER THE ADMIRATION OF THE COURT OFFICIALS, THEY WOULD PERFORM JOYOUSLY. THE EMPEROR OFTEN CLAIMED, "THE JIEGU PRODUCES THE BEST OF THE BIGHT TONES AND THERE IS NO OTHER WHICH CAN COMPARE TO IT." BELONGING ORIGINALLY TO THE MINORITY TRIBES, THEY INVOLVED A PORTION OF THE TONES FROM THE TAICU SCALE, INCORPORATING NOTES FROM KUCHA, GAOCHANG, SHULE, TIANZHU, PRODUCING A ROBUST AND UNIQUE FOLKS CIND."

- NEW BOOK OF TANG: RITES AND MUSIC, TWELVE

YANG GUIFEI'S ENTRANCE

WHEN THE IMPERIAL PALACE DOORS WERE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, THE CIVILIANS WERE WELCOMED WITH VIBRANT ENTERTAINMENT TROUPES AND THEIR ILLUSIONS, AS WELL AS RHINOCEROS AND ELEPHANTS.



"ENTERTAINERS WERE COMMON ACROSS EVERY DYNASTY, CAPABLE OF A VARIETY OF MUSICAL AND DANCE PERFORMANCES. WHEN THE EMPEROR DESCENDED FROM THE HEAVENS TO THE ORCHESTRATION OF MUSIC, THE BEAST SHE LI WOULD COME FROM THE WEST. PLAYING IN THE PALACE COURTYARD, IT WOULD TRANSFORM INTO A FLOUNDER WITHIN THE POND, LEAPING THROUGH THE WATERS, CONJURING CLOUDS OF MIST, FINALLY TURNING INTO A PRAGON EIGHT FEET LONG. IT WOULD DANCE IN THE WATERS, GLISTENING IN THE SUN'S RAYS. TWO FEMALE PERFORMERS WOULD DANCE UPON A ROPE STRUNG ACROSS TWO POLES, A LENGTH OF MANY ZHANG, BRUSHING SHOULDERS BUT NEVER LOSING THEIR FOOTING. SUCH WERE THE DIVERSITY OF PERFORMANCES, COUNTLESS IN THEIR TRICKS."

- OLD BOOK OF TANG, CHRONICLE NINE: MUSIC, TWO

"THE ANIMAL HANDLERS LEAD THE ELEPHANTS, AS OFFERINGS OR PART OF THE DANCE, ENERGIZING THE CROWD TOGETHER WITH THE MUSIC."

- OLD BOOK OF TANG, CHRONICLE EIGHT: MUSIC, ONE

"THE MINISTER OF CEREMONIES WOULD LEAD THE CEREMONIAL MUSIC, WHILE THE ANIMAL HANDLERS WOULD LEAD THE ELEPHANTS AND RHINOCEROSES IN TO DANCE IN HONOR OF THE EMPEROR. IT WAS COMMON FOR THOSE IN THE PALACE TO DON THEIR FINEST WEAR OF EMBROIDERED SILKS, AND THE CELEBRATIONS TO BE ENLIVENED BY THE WAXING OF FLAGS AND THE THUNDERING OF DRUMS."

- NEW BOOK OF TANG: RITES AND MUSIC, TWELVE



IN PART TWO, WHEN THE BANQUET OFFICIALLY BEGINS, THE MALE MUSICIAN PLAYING THE PIPA (CHINESE LUTE) AND SINGING LI BAI'S "LYRICS FOR WANDERING IN THE PALACE" IS THE FAMOUS TIANBAO ERA MUSICIAN LEI HAIQING (716 A.D. - 755 A.D.).



AN LUSHAN ENTERS THE IMPERIAL COURT

THE THIRTEENTH YEAR OF TIANBAO, FIRST MONTH OF THE LUNAR CALENDAR, AN LUSHAN ENTERS THE IMPERIAL COURT.

"THE FIFTH MONTH OF THE THIRTEENTH YEAR, SPRING, THE DAY OF JIHAI, AN LUSHAN ENTERS THE IMPERIAL COURT. YANG GUOZHONG EXPRESSED HIS CONVICTION THAT LUSHAN WOULD DEFINITELY STIR A REBELLION, STATING, 'EVEN IF YOUR MAJESTY WERE TO ISSUE AN IMPERIAL EDICT SUMMONING HIM, HE WOULD NOT COME,' HENCE, THE EMPEROR ORDERED MEN TO SUMMON AN LUSHAN. UPON HEARING THE SUMMON, AN LUSHAN HURRIED TO THE IMPERIAL CITY, ON THE DAY OF GENGZI, AN LUSHAN MADE HIS APPEARANCE AT HUACING PALACE, EXCLAIMING, 'I AM A PERSON OF HU WHO HAS RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE FAVOR FROM HIS MAJESTY, TO BE ABLE TO SERVE FOR THE COUNTRY, I CAN DIE WITH NO REGRETS!!" WITH SUCH AN APPEAL, LUSHAN WAS REWARDED HANDSOMELY AND DUE TO THE EMPEROR'S TRUST IN HIM, GUOZHONG'S WORDS WERE IN VAIN. THE CROWN PRINCE KNEW OF LUSHAN'S REBELLION AND WARNED THE EMPEROR, BUT HIS WORDS FELL ON DEAF BARS."

- COMPREHENSIVE MIRROR IN AID OF GOVERNANCE

"GUOZHONG FORWARDED THE INVESTIGATION INTO LUSHAN'S REBELLION... BUT HIS SUBORDINATE ACCEPTED A BRIBE FROM AN LUSHAN, LEADING HIM TO SING PRAISES OF AN LUSHAN WHEN HE RETURNED. GUOZHONG ALSO ACCUSED AN LUSHAN OF 'NOT HEEDING IMPERIAL ORDERS, EVEN WHEN SUMMONED! ACTING PURELY ON HIS OWN WILL. IN THE FIRST MONTH OF THE THIRTEENTH YEAR, LUSHAN ENTERED HUAQING PALACE, WEEPING HE SAID, 'I AM AN ILLITERATE BARBARIAN, YET YOUR MALIESTY HAS PROMOTED ME AGAIN AND AGAIN, CAUSING GUOZHONG TO WANT TO KILL ME! XUANZONG TRUSTED HIM DEEPLY, BESTOWING UPON HIM THE TITLE OF RIGHT CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR BEFORE ALLOWING HIM TO LEAVE. IN THE SAME MONTH, HE ALSO APPLIED TO BE HEAD OF THE IMPERIAL STABLES AND COMMANDER OF LONGSHI CIRCUIT HE ALSO REQUESTED FOR JI WEN TO BE THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR THE MILITARY, AS WELL AS GIVING HIM THE TITLE OF IMPERIAL COUNSELLOR AND LATER VICE GOVERNOR IN SERVICE OF HIS OWN OFFICE. LUSHAN ALSO REQUISTED TO BE ALLOWED TO ASSIST IN THE OFFICE OF GENERAL AFFAIRS, WITH CONTROL OVER THE STABLES, HIS MILITARY PROWESS WAS STRENGTHENED, HE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THIS, ACQUIRING THE FINEST STEADS FOR HIMSELF FROM THE LOUFAN AND ZHANG WENYAN'S STABLES. ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE THIRD MONTH, HE RETURNED TO FANYANG, WITH WORD BEING SPREAD THAT HE WAS TO CROSS THE BORDERS, HE TRAVELLED FOR DAYS OVER A DISTANCE OF BETWEEN THIREE AND FOUR HUNDRED MILEST TOWARDS FANYANG, XUANZONG WOULD FLY INTO A RAGE WHENEVER ANYONE MENTIONED LUSHAN'S REBELLION, AND THEY WOULD BE BOUND AND SENT TO AN LUSHAN. IN THE FOURTEENTH YEAR, XUANZONG SUMMONED HIM TO THE IMPERIAL CITY BUT HE REPORTED THAT HE HAD FALLEN ILL AND WAS UNABLE TO ATTEND. WHEN THE EMPEROR OFFERED A MARRIAGE PROPOSAL FOR AN LUSHAN'S SON, ORDERING HIM TO ATTEND, HE ALSO REFUSED."

FLOWER FARMERS OF DULING

THE VILLAGE OF DULING IS A REAL VILLAGE THAT EXISTED DURING THE TANG DYNASTY, MADE UP OF A COMMUNITY OF FLOWER FARMERS. THEY MADE THEIR LIVING SELLING FLOWERS. FLOWER MARKETS WERE ALREADY WELL ESTABLISHED DURING THE TANG DYNASTY, WHERE VALUABLE FLOWERS WOULD FETCH EXORBITANT PRICES, BUT THESE MARKETS WERE STILL LOVED BY THE NOBLES OF CHANG'AN.



"THE PEOPLE OF DULING VILLAGE DON'T HARVEST CROPS, THE VALLEY AND A STREAM LEADS YOU TO THE DESTINED PLACE. THE GRASS AND TREES OF NANSHAN EVERY SPRING BRINGS THE REWARDS OF GOLD AND JADES."

- SONG FOR BUYING FLOWERS, LIU YANSHII

"A SINGLE CLUSTER OF DEEPLY COLORED BLOOMS, TEN FACTIONS OF THIEVING MEN."

- BUYING FLOWERS, BAI JUYI

"WHAT PERSON DOES NOT LOVE PEONIES? IT POSSESSES THE GLORY OF THE ALL CITY'S BEAUTY."

- COMPLETE TANG POETRY: PEONIES, XIJ NING

HUA'E TOWER AT XINGQING PALACE

XINGQING PALACE IS LOCATED TO THE EAST OF THE IMPERIAL CITY. WITHIN THE PALACE STANDS XINGQING HALL, THE GOVERNMENT BUILDING, HUA'E XIANGHUI TOWER, CHENXIANG PAVILION AND MORE. HUA'E TOWER WAS PROCLAIMED TO BE THE WORLD'S FOREMOST TOWER, WHERE XUANZONG OFTEN HOSTED BANQUETS AND ENJOYED ENTERTAINMENT WITH HIS PEOPLE.

"ON THE DAY OF GUIHAI IN THE EIGHTH MONTH, THE DAY OF THE EMPEROR'S BIRTH, HUNDREDS OF OFFICIALS GATHERED UNDER HUA'E TOWER."

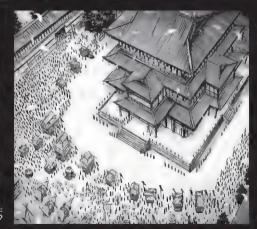
"THE DAY OF DINGMAO, OFFICIALS ARE IN ATTENDANCE AT THE BANQUET OUTSIDE CHUNMING GATE, BY THE POND OF NING WANGXIAN. THE EMPEROR INVITES THEM TO RIDE UP TO HUA'E TOWER BEFORE GIVING THE ORDER TO BEGIN THE CELEBRATIONS. THE GENEROSITY OF REWARDS WAS MEASURED BY ONE'S DANCE."

"ON THE DAY OF DINGHAI IN THE EIGHTH MONTH, AT HUA'E TOWER, THE EMPEROR REWARDS HIS MANY OFFICIALS IN THE NAME OF QIANQIU FESTIVAL. FOURTH RANKING OFFICIALS AND ABOVE WERE BESTOWED WITH GOLD MIRRORS, BAGS OF PEARLS AND COLORED SILK, WHILE THOSE OF THE FIFTH RANK AND BELOW WERE REWARDED WITH BOLTS OF PLAIN SILK."

- OLD BOOK OF TANG, BOOK EIGHT: XUANZONG, ONE OF TWO

"THE CUSTOM IN AUGUST IS TO GATHER AT HUA'E TOWER, WHERE MANY FEAST TO THEIR HEART'S CONTENT CELEBRATING QIANQIU."

- COLLECTION OF SONGS AND SHORT POEMS: FESTIVITIES OF QIANGIU, ZHANG HU



PEONIES

THE PEOPLE OF TANG LOVED PEONIES THE MOST. PEONIES STARTED TO GROW IN POPULARITY WITHIN THE TWENTY YEARS FROM APPROXIMATELY THE SIXTH YEAR OF THE YONGHUI ERA (655 A.D.) TO THE FIRST YEAR OF THE HONGDAO ERA (682 A.D.) UNDER THE RULLE OF EMPEROR GAOZONG.

- LI SHUTONG, THE TANG PEOPLE'S LOVE OF PEONIES

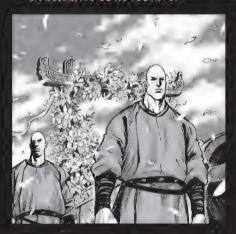


TANG POEMS AND HISTORICAL RECORDS STAND AS EVIDENCE FOR HOW PEONIES WERE HIGHLY VALUED AT THAT TIME. OUT OF THESE WRITINGS, THE MOST FAMOUS WOULD BE, "A SINGLE PEONY IS WORTH A THOUSAND GOLD PIECES."

NA SINGLE PEONY IS WORTH A THOUSAND GOLD PIECES, A DEEPER SHADE EMBODYING GREATER BEAUTY!

- COMPLETE TANG POETRY: PEONIES, ZHANG YOUXIN

BESIDES PEONIES, OTHER TYPES OF FLOWERS THAT WERE POPULAR DURING THE TANG DYNASTY INCLUDE CHINESE PEONIES, CHRYSANTHEMUMS, ORCHIDS, BABY ROSES, RHODODENDRONS, CAMELLIAS, AND LOTUS FLOWERS.



THE DOMINEERING FLOWER CARRIAGE

"GUOZHONG HAS ONCE AGAIN BUILT HIS PAVILION WITH AGARWOOD, WITH THAT OF THE BRANCHES AS ITS FRAME, THE SMELL OF MUSK AND FRANKINCENSE MIXED INTO THE SOIL TO FORM ITS WALLS. EVERY SPRING WHEN THE PEONIES ARE IN BLOOM, HE GATHERS GUESTS IN THIS PAVILION TO ADMIRE THE FLOWERS AND STREETS. NO OTHER CAN COMPARE WITH THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THIS PAVILION."

- KAIYUAN TIANBAO RECORDS: FOUR FRAGRANCE PAVILION

SNATCHING THE VICTORY WITH THE FLOWER CARRIAGE, "SHIFTING SPRINGS"

"EVERY SPRING, THE MEN WHO SERVE YANG GUOZHONG GATHER FAMOUS PLANTS AND FLOWERS FOR HIS CARRIAGE. WITH A BOARD BASE AND WOODEN WHEELS, IT ROLLS ALONG AS IT IS CARRIED BY HIS MEN. THE CARRIAGE DRAWS THE ADMIRATION OF OTHERS DUE TO ITS DESIGN AND HAS THUS BEEN TERMED THE SHIFTING SPRINGS CARRIAGE."

- KAIYUAN TIANBAO RECORDS: SHIFTING SPRINGS



THE FESTIVAL OF FLOWERS







IN THE FIRST CHAPTER, THE SCENE OF CHANG'AN'S STREETS DEPICT THE PRACTICE OF "FLOWER VIEWING" AND "NOBLE LADIES VYING FOR FLOWERS". THE YOUTH OF CHANG'AN WANDER THE STREETS IN ADMIRATION OF THE FLOWERS AND THE LADIES COMPETE TO SEE WHO CAN GATHER THE LARGEST OFFERINGS OF FLOWERS.

"AT SPRING BACH YEAR, THE YOUTH IN CHANG'AN WOULD GATHER WITH THEIR FRIENDS, SADDLING PONIES, DECORATED IN BROCADES AND STROLL BY THE FLOWERS AND TREES,"

- KAIYUAN TIANBAO RECORDS: FLOWER VIEWING

"THE ROYAL GARDENS FILL WITH THOUSANDS OF NEW BLOSSOMS, THE EMPEROR PICKS ONE AND PLACES IT IN THE CONCUBINE'S PRECIOUS COIFFURE, SAYING, 'THIS FLOWER HIGHLIGHTS YOUR BEAUTY!"

- KAIYUAN TIANBAO RECORDS: FLOWERS TO AID BEAUTY

"THE LADIES OF CHANG'AN VIE WITH FLOWERS IN SPRING, THOSE BARNING THE MOST EMERGE VICTORIOUS. THOUSANDS OF GOLD PIECES ARE EXCHANGED FOR FAMOUS FLOWERS TO BE PLANTED IN THE IMPERIAL GARDENS, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF SPRING."

- KAIYUAN TIANBAO RECORDS: VYING WITH FLOWERS

ABE NO NAKAMARO AND MONK JIANZHEN

ABE NO NAKAMARO (698-770)

IN THE OLD BOOK OF TANG, THE CHAPTER "BIOGRAPHIES ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-NINE" STATES: "THE COUNTRY OF NIPPON IS DISTINCT FROM THE COUNTRY OF WA. BECAUSE THE COUNTRY IS NEAR THE SUN, IT WENT BY THE NAME OF "NIPPON" (日本, JAPAN OR LAND OF THE RISING SUN). SOME SAY THAT THE PEOPLE OF WA DISLIKED THE OFFENSIVE NAME "WA" (後, WHICH HAS CONNOTATIONS OF SUBMISSIVENESS OR SMALL STATURE), AND CHANGED IT TO "NIPPON". OTHERS SAY THAT NIPPON WAS FORMERLY A SMALL COUNTRY THAT LATER COMBINED WITH THE LAND OF WA."

AN EMISSARY TO THE TANG, ABE NO NAKAMARO CAME TO THE TANG DYNASTY IN THE FIFTH YEAR OF KAIYUAN (717). ADMIRING CHINESE CULTURE, HE WAS UNWILLING TO LEAVE, STAYING IN CHANG'AN AND ADOPTING THE CHINESE NAME "CHAO HENG". HE WAS A GOOD FRIEND OF LIBAI. IN OCTOBER 753, AT THE AGE OF 55, ABE NO NAKAMARO JOINED THE MISSION OF FUJIWARA NO KIYOKAWA ON THEIR RETURN TRIP TO JAPAN. THE PEOPLE OF CHANG'AN, FROM THOSE IN THE IMPERIAL COURT TO CIVILIANS, GATHERED TO SEND THEM OFF. THE MONK JIANZHEN OF YANGZHOU WENT EAST TO JAPAN WITH THEM TO SPREAD BUDDHIST TEACHINGS. ABE NO NAKAMARO'S SHIP WAS CLOSE TO RYUKYU WHEN THEY MET WITH DISASTER, LOSING CONTACT WITH THE MONK JIANZHEN'S SHIP. THEY DRIFTED TO THE REGION OF ANNAN (PRESENT DAY VIETNAM). A FALSE RUMOR SPREAD THROUGHOUT CHANG'AN, CLAIMING THAT ABE NO NAKAMARO HAD PASSED AWAY, LEADING LI BAI TO COMPOSE "CRYING FOR CHAO HENG."

JIANZHEN (688-763)

ALSO KNOWN AS THE SEA-VOYAGING MONK, A GREAT MONK OF THE TANG DYNASTY. BORN IN JIANGYANG, YANGZHOU, IN THE TANG DYNASTY (PRESENT DAY JIANGSU, YANGZHOU), HIS FORMER NAME WAS CHUNYU. HE LEFT HOME TO JOIN DAYUN TEMPLE AT FOURTEEN. AT THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN, HE TOOK HIS BODHISATTVA VOWS WITH THE TANG MONK DAO'AN AND DEVOTED HIMSELF TO THE STUDY OF RISSHI BUDDHISM. AT TWENTY-ONE, HE TOOK HIS UPASAMPADA VOWS IN CHANG'AN. HE TRAVELLED CHANG'AN AND LLOYANG, STUDYING THE TRIPITAKA SCRIPTURES, WITH A FOCUS ON RISSHI. HE LATER TAUGHT THE MONASTIC COMMANDMENTS IN DAMING TEMPLE IN YANGZHOU, BECOMING A FAMOUS TEACHER OF THE COMMANDMENTS IN AND AROUND THE JIANGHUAI REGION. IN THE FIRST YEAR OF TIANBAO (742), AT THE INVITATION OF THE JAPANESE MONKS YOEI AND FUSHO, WHO HAD COME TO THE TANGE TO LEARN BUDDHISM, HE TRAVELED EAST TO JAPAN WITH HIS DISCIPLES, INCLUDING XIANGYAN AND SITUO. FIVE ATTEMPTS TO CROSS THE SEA FAILED ONE AFTER ANOTHER. OVER THE AGE OF SIXTY, BLIND IN BOTH EYES, HE REMAINED PETERMINED. IN THE TWELFTH YEAR OF TIANBAO, HE WAS INVITED TO JAPAN ONCE AGAIN. WITH THE BHIKKHUS FAJIN AND XIANJING, THE NUN ZHISHOU, THE UPASAKA PAN XIANTONG AND OTHERS, HE FINALLY SUCCEEDED ON THE SIXTH TRIP WITH TANG EMISSARY FUJIWARA NO KIYOKAWA'S FLEET, MAKING LANDFALL IN AKIZUMA YAURA IN SATSUMA, KYUSHU (PRESENT-DAY AKIME IN KAGOSHIMA, SOUTHERN KYUSHU).





"LIFE IN THIS WORLD DOES NOT HEED ONE'S DESIRES, I WOULD MUCH RATHER LOOSEN MY HAIR AND RIFE UPON A RIVER BOAT THE NEXT MORNING."

> - FAREWELL FOR SHU YUN AT XUAN ZHOU'S XIE TIAO HOUSE, LI BAI

*JAPAN'S CHAO QING DEPARTS FROM THE CAPITAL, SAILING AROUND THE [FABLED EASTERN ISLE OF] PENGHU."

- CRYING FOR CHAO HENG, LI BAI

LI BAI HAD A WIDE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS. THE EMISSARY TO THE TANG DYNASTY ABE NO NAKAMARO (CHINESE NAME CHAO HENG) WAS ONE OF HIS CLOSE FRIENDS. IN THE WINTER OF THE TWELFTH YEAR OF TIANBAO (753 A.D.), A FEW MONTHS BEFORE THIS STORY TAKES PLACE, CHAO HENG, ALONG WITH THE DELEGATION OF TANG EMISSARY FUJIWARA NO KIYOKAWA, WERE RETURNING TO JAPAN WHEN THEY MET WITH DISASTER AT SEA. WORD HAD SPREAD THAT ABE NO NAKAMARO HAD PASSED AWAY. LI BAI WROTE "CRYING FOR CHAO HENG" IN HIS DESPAIR.





IT IS NOT CLEAR WHEN "ODE TO GALLANTRY" WAS WRITTEN, BUT IT IS THE MOST WELL-KNOWN POEM OF LI BAI'S WANDERING SWORDSMAN COLLECTION. FORMAL HISTORICAL RECORDS DETAIL THAT LI BAI HAD COLLAPSED AND EVENTUALLY PASSED AWAY IN XUANCHENG FROM DRINKING TOO MUCH ALCOHOL. FOLK LEGEND HAS IT THAT, WHILE DRUNK, LI BAI LEAPT INTO THE WATER TO CATCH THE MOON AND DROWNED.





CLOUDS BRING TO MIND HER CLOTHING, FLOWERS HER FACE. THE FLOWERS GROW LOVELIER IN THE SPRING BREEZE AND DEW."

- SONG OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY, ONE, LI BAIL

"AND IN THE PALACE, THE FIRST IS LADY FEIYAN IN ZHAOYANG."

- LYRICS FOR WANDERING IN THE PALACE, LI BAI

AS AN IMPERIAL SCHOLAR IN THE COURT, LI BAI WROTE THE THREE VERSES THAT MAKE UP THE FAMOUS SONG, "SONG FOR PEACE AND TRANQUILITY," THE EIGHT VERSES OF "LYRICS FOR WANDERING IN THE PALACE," AND MANY OTHER POEMS THAT REMAIN WELL-KNOWN TO THIS DAY, HIS DREAMS OF BECOMING AN OFFICIAL SLOWLY DIED. THIS WAS REFLECTED IN MANY HISTORICAL RECORDS BOTH OFFICIAL AND INFORMAL, AS WELL AS IN HIS OWN WRITINGS.

"WHEN XUANZONG SUMMONED [WU] JUN TO COURT, JUN RECOMMENDED [LI BAI] TO THE COURT AS WELL, AND HE JOINED THE HANLIN ACADEMY WITH JUN. BAI WAS GREATLY ENJOYED PRINKING; EVERY DAY, HE WOULD PRINK HIMSELF INTO A STUPOR AT THE TAYERN WITH OTHER DRUNKARDS. XUANZONG HAD COMPOSED A MELODY AND WANTED LYRICS FOR IT. HE SUMMONED BAI URGENTLY, BUT BAI WAS ASLEEP IN THE TAVERN. BROUGHT IN, HIS FACE WAS SPLASHED WITH COLD WATER AND HE WAS ORDERED TO WRITE. HE IMMEDIATELY WROTE MORE THAN TEN VERSES, PLEASING THE EMPEROR GREATLY. ONCE, DRUNK IN COURT, HE STRETCHED HIS FOOT OUT AND DEMANDED THAT GAO LISHI REMOVE HIS BOOTS FOR HIM. HENCE, HE WAS FORCED TO LEAVE [CHANG'AN]. AFTER THIS, HE WANDERED THE WORLD, DROWNING HIMSELF IN DRINK ALL DAY."

- OLD BOOK OF TANG: RECORDS OF LI BAN

"I AM A FREE AND UNCONSTRAINED PERSON, BUT THE NARROW-MINDED MOCK ME."

- READING IN THE HANLIN ACADEMY AND SPEAKING MY HEART TO THE SCHOLARS OF JIXIAN ACADEMY, LI BAIL

"LI BAI EXTENDED HIS FOOT AND ORDERED GAO LISHI: "REMOVE MY SHOE!" LISHI WAS PUT IN A SPOT AND EVENTUALLY REMOVED THE SHOE. XUANZONG CRITICISED LI BAI, ACCORDING TO LISHI: "HOW UNGRACIOUS."

- MISCELLANEOUS MORSELS FROM YOUYANG

LI BAI PRONOUNCED HIMSELF TO BE A "FREE AND UNCONSTRAINED PERSON". THOUGH HE HELD A POSITION OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE, HE CAME INTO CONFLICT WITH MANY IN THE PALACE, CAUSING HIM TO BE THE TARGET OF NUMEROUS CRITICISMS AND SLANDER. LI'S RECORDS OF HANLIN DETAILS HOW LI BAI WAS "BANISHED DUE TO ZHANG JI'S SLANDERS", AND LI BAI WROTE IN SELF-RECOMMENDATION TO ASSISTANT IMPERIAL COUNSELLOR SONG, "DUE TO SCHEMING OFFICIALS, I HAVE BEEN CAST OUT."

BEYOND ZHANG JI, GAO LISHI AND YANG YUHUAN ALSO PLOTTED TO SMEAR LI BAI'S REPUTATION. MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS FROM THE PINE WINDOW RECORDS HOW GAO LISHI, DISGRACED BY THE BOOT-REMOVING INCIDENT, SOWED DISCORD BETWEEN LI BAI AND YANG YUHUAN, LISHI EXPLAINED THAT IN "SONG OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY", "IN COMPARING YOUR HIGHNESS TO ZHAO FEIYAN, HE IS INSINUATING THAT YOU ARE LOWLY BORN." AS A RESULT, LI BAI LOST YANG YUHUAN'S FAVOR. XUANZONG HAD INTENDED TO BESTOW THE TITLE OF AN OFFICIAL TO LI BAI THRICE, BUT YANG YUHUAN HAD INTERVENED THRICE TO PREVENT THIS FROM COMING TO FULFILMENT. FURTHERMORE, IN XUANZONG'S EYES, LI BAI WAS SIMPLY "UNGRACIOUS", LEADING LI BAI TO BE "DISMISSED WITH REWARDS OF GOLD". HENCE, LI BAI WAS LEFT TO WANDER THE WORLD.



"A MAN MUST BEAR GREAT AMBITION. WITH ONLY HIS SWORD, HE MUST LEAVE HIS FAMILY TO JOURNEY FAR AND WIDE."

- RECORDS FOR GOVERNOR PEI OF ANZHOU, LI BAI

LI BAI WAS ONE OF THE GREAT ROMANTIC POETS OF THE TANG DYNASTY, NICKNAMED "THE BANISHED IMMORTAL". IN HIS YOUTH, LI BAI HELD CHIVALRIC HEROISM IN GREAT REVERENCE AND HAD GRAND PLANS, ASPIRING TO BECOME A PALACE OFFICIAL. IN THE FIRST YEAR OF TIANBAO (742 A.D.), EMPEROR XUANZONG SUMMONED LI BAI TO COURT, ORDERING HIM TO SERVE IN THE HANLIN ACADEMY, RETAINING HIM AS AN ENTERTAINER FOR BANQUETS AND TO COMPOSE POETRY AT THE IMPERIAL FAMILY'S PLEASURE.



IN THE TWELFTH YEAR OF TIANBAO (753 A.D.), LI BAI WAS FIFTY-THREE. IN SPRING, HE RETURNED TO WEI COMMANDERY, THEN TOOK A ROUNDABOUT ROUTE TO LIANGSONG VIA LUCYANG. FROM LIANGYUAN, HE CONTINUED SOUTH AND REACHED XUANCHENG IN THE AUTUMN, THEN HEADED NORTH AGAIN TO JINLING IN WINTER.

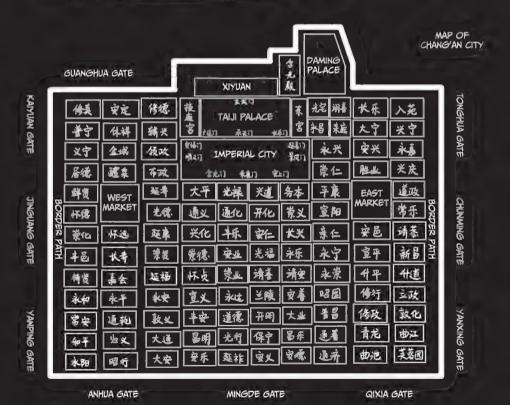
IN THE THIRTEENTH YEAR OF TIANBAO (754 A.D.), LI BAI WAS FIFTY-FOUR, TRAVELLING ACROSS GUANGLING. HE VISITED JINLING WITH WEI WAN, SAILING THE GINHUAI RIVER. IN JINLING, HE ENTRUSTED HIS LITERARY WORKS TO WEI WAN, WHICH WERE LATTER COMPILED IN LI'S HANLIN COLLECTION. AFTER PARTING WAYS WITH WEI WAN, HE TRAVELLED BETWEEN XUANCHENG, QIUPU, NANLING, AND OTHER SUCH PLACES. HE ONCE TRAVELLED TO HUANGSHAN.

CHANG'AN

"TIANBAO" (LASTING FROM THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH OF 742 A.D. TO THE SEVENTH MONTH OF 756 A.D.) WAS THE ERA NAME COINED BY TANG DYNASTY EMPEROR LI LONGJI. IN THE FIRST LUNAR MONTH OF THE THIRD YEAR OF TIANBAO, THE TERM FOR "YEAR" WAS CHANGED FROM "# (NIAN)" TO "N. (ZAI)".

DURING THE TIANBAO PERIOD, THE TANG EMPIRE GREW POWERFUL AND PROSPEROUS, PEACE REIGNING THROUGHOUT THE LAND. IT WAS A LIBERAL AND INCLUSIVE ERA, A GLORIOUS GOLDEN AGE OF OPTIMISM. NESTORIANS, ARABS, ZOROASTRIANS FROM SOGDIA ("FIRE-WORSHIPPERS"); FROM EVERY COUNTRY IN CENTRAL ASIA AND WEST ASIA, MERCHANTS, MONKS, TAOIST PRIESTS, TRAVELING PERFORMERS AND ENTERTAINERS—ALL GATHERED IN THE CAPITAL OF CHANG'AN.

CHANG'AN SERVED AS THE CAPITAL OF THIRTEEN CHINESE DYNASTIES, AS WELL AS THE EASTERN TERMINUS OF THE SILK ROAD. THE CITY OF CHANG'AN WAS DEVELOPED THROUGH THE DESIGN OF THE SUI DYNASTY'S YUWEN KAI FOR THE SUI CITY OF DAXING. AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TANG DYNASTY, DAXING BECAME CHANG'AN. THE CITY OF CHANG'AN ADOPTED A GRID SYSTEM, WITH A TOTAL OF ONE HUNDRED AND NINE WARDS, AND TWO MARKETPLACES, ONE IN THE EAST AND ONE IN THE WEST. THE REGULAR GRID STRUCTURE AKIN TO A CHESSBOARD, THE CITY WAS DIVIDED BY ZHUQUE STREET, WITH CHANG'AN COUNTY TO THE WEST AND WANNIAN COUNTY TO THE EAST.



ASSASSIN'S CREED DYNASTY



THE SHIP THAT LORD FUJIWARA AND I WERE ON HIT THE ROCKS AND WE WERE UNABLE TO CONTINUE SAILING. WE LOST CONTACT WITH THE OTHER THREE SHIPS, AND IN THE MIDST OF THE CRASHING WAVES, I GRADUALLY LOST CONSCIOUSNESS.

WHEN I OPENED MY EYES, I FOUND MYSELF WASHED UP ON A SHORE. OUR SHIP HAD BEEN TERRIBLY WRECKED AND WE DID NOT KNOW WHERE WE WERE. TOGETHER WITH LORD FUJIWARA, WE LED THE MEN TO ABANDON OUR SHIP AND SEARCH FOR HELP.

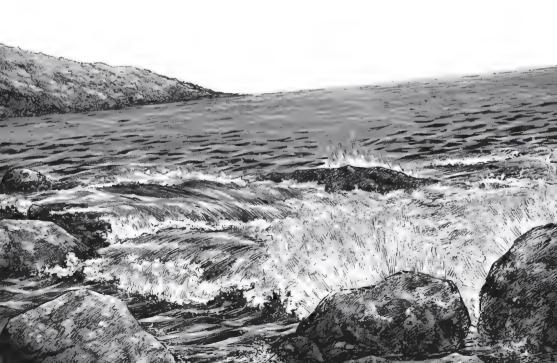
I WONDER IF THIS IS JAPAN OR THE TANG?

EVERYTHING IS UNKNOWN. I CAN ONLY TRUST THE GROUND BENEATH MY FEET. IF I SHOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO RETURN HOME, I CAN ONLY ACCEPT MY FATE.

I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT MONK JIANZHEN'S SHIP IS SAFE. I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THE RELICS WILL ABLE ABLE TO REACH THEIR DESTINATION UNHARMED. I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THE TANG AND JAPAN WILL REMAIN PEACEFUL.

I DO NOT KNOW WHEN I WILL BE ABLE TO SEND THIS LETTER, SO I WILL KEEP IT WITH ME FOR THE TIME BEING. IF THERE IS A NEXT LIFE, I HOPE I WILL BE ABLE TO SHARE A POT OF WINE WITH YOU ONCE MORE.

-CHAO HENG (ABE NO NAKAMARO)



MONK JIANZHEN HAS ATTEMPTED TO CROSS THE EAST SEA FIVE TIMES, BUT TO NO AVAIL, THOUGH THESE FAILURES HAVE LED HIM TO BE EVEN MORE DETERMINED.

I DESPERATELY HOPE TO BE ABLE TO ASSIST MONK JIANZHEN IN PROTECTING THE RELICS.

MOREOVER, HE CAN USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SPREAD BUDDHIST TEACHINGS IN JAPAN AND ENLIGHTEN THE MASSES. IT WOULD BE A GREAT MERIT IN THIS CASE.

AS SUCH, I REACHED OUT TO LORD FUJIWARA NO KIYOKAWA THAT HAD COME TO TANG ON AN EXPEDITION, TO BID FAREWELL TO CHANG'AN. WE ARE ESCORTING MONK JIANZHEN IN SECRET AND SAILING FOR JAPAN. IF WE ARE SO LUCKY AS TO HAVE OUR MOVEMENTS GO UNNOTICED BY THE GOLDEN TURTLES, IT WILL TRULY BE A FEAT.

WE HAVE SPLIT UP INTO FOUR SHIPS AND ARE SAILING SMOOTHLY ON THE QUIET SEAS. I CLOSE MY EYES AND I CAN ALMOST SMELL MY HOMELAND.

"LOOKING UP TOWARDS CHANG'AN, I SPEED TOWARDS NARA'S SHORES. UPON THE PEAK OF MOUNT MIKASA, I PONDER THE RADIANCE OF THE MOON."

AS MY HOMELAND DRAWS CLOSER, I LOOK UP AT THE MOON, AND THINK OF THE PARTING WITH YOU, LI BAI, THAT HAS LED ME TO PEN THIS LETTER.

BUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT, A STORM BROKE OUT AT SEA.



AS YOU MIGHT KNOW, I AM SOMEONE FILLED WITH CURIOSITY, AND MY CURIOSITY HAS LED ME TO LEARN OF SOME SECRETS.

IT SEEMS THAT THE BUDDHA THAT WE HAVE COME TO KNOW HAVE BEEN TERMED THE PRECURSOR.

IN ANCIENT HISTORY, THE PRECURSOR SHAKYAMUNI LED HIS DISCIPLES TO SPREAD THE DHARMA, AND HE WAS BELOVED AND RESPECTED BY MANY. THEREFORE, WHEN HE CHOSE TO ABANDON HIS FLESH TO ATTAIN NIRVANA, IT WAS A TRAGEDY TO THOSE AROUND HIM.

AFTER THE BUDDHA WAS CREMATED, HIS DISCIPLES FOUND A LARGE NUMBER OF MULTICOLORED BEADS IN HIS ASHES. THESE BECAME KNOWN AS "THE BUDDHA'S RELICS" AND EACH BEAD OF THE BUDDHA RELICS WERE INDESTRUCTIBLE, FILLED WITH SHAKYAMUNI'S MEMORIES FROM HIS PAST LIFE - THE TRUTH OF THE UNIVERSE.

THE BUDDHA'S RELICS TRAVELLED ALONG THE TRADE ROUTES FROM THE WESTERN REGIONS INTO HAN CHINA, WHERE THEY WERE PASSED ON FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION THROUGH THE TURMOIL OF THE AGES, KEPT AND PROTECTED BY RESPECTABLE MONKS.

PRESENTLY, THE BUDDHA RELICS AS WE KNOW THEM, ARE IN THE POSSESSION OF MONK JIANZHEN OF THE YANGUANG TEMPLE IN YANGZHOU.

MONK JIANZHEN IS A WISE MAN AND A HIGHLY RESPECTED MONK. EVEN IN TIMES OF PEACE, HE REMAINS TROUBLED.

LIKE YOU AND I, MONK JIANZHEN KNOWS OF THE GOLDEN TURTLES' EXISTENCE IN THE PALACE. THERE HAVE BEEN MANY HINTS OF A GREAT UPHEAVAL WITHIN OUR TIME, BUT WE KNOW NOT WHEN THIS MAY BE, SHOULD THE RELICS FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE WICKED, TO BE USED FOR SOME AMBITIOUS SCHEME, THE CONSEQUENCES DO NOT BEAR IMAGINING.

MONK JIIANZHEN HOPES TO KEEP THE RELICS IN A DISCREET LOCATION, FAR AWAY FROM STRIFE AND TURBULENCE. HE SAYS THAT BUDDHISM KNOWS NO BORDERS, AND PERHAPS JAPAN MIGHT BE THE BEST PLACE TO HEAD TOWARDS.



PAYING RESPECTS TO LI BAI

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN? MANY MONTHS HAVE PASSED SINCE WE PARTED IN CHANG'AN IN OCTOBER LAST YEAR.

I REMEMBER WHAT YOU SAID TO ME WHEN YOU SAW ME OFF... *THIS FAREWELL WILL BE OUR LAST.*

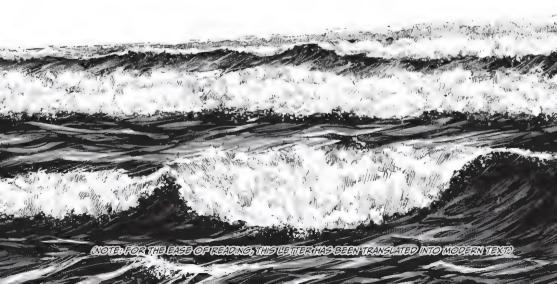
I ALSO REMEMBER, WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED AT THE TANG EMPIRE, I WAS ONLY A NINETEEN YEAR OLD BOY, OVERWHELMED BY ITS SPLENDOR. I AM ALREADY FIFTY. I HAVE WITNESSED THE LIVELINESS AND BEAUTY OF CHANG'AN MADE MANY CLOSE FRIENDS, AND THE TANG HAVE ALSO BECOME A PART OF ME.

BUT AS I GROW OLD, I'M STARTING TO MISS THE TASTE OF MY HOMELAND.

HAVING SPENT THIRTY YEARS IN TANG, IT SEEMS LIKE A WONDERFUL DREAM. I ONLY WANT TO BE ABLE TO TASTE MY MOTHER'S COOKING ONE MORE TIME BEFORE I DIE.

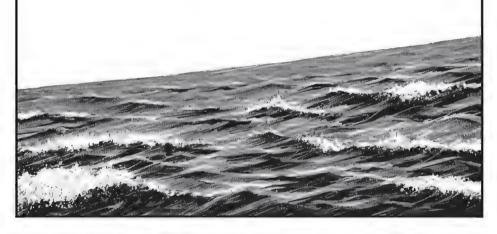
THAT IS WHY I AM FOLLOWING LORD FUJIWARA'S ENVOY IN RETURNING TO JAPAN FOR THE PURPOSE OF FULFILLING THIS LAST WISH OF MINE.

BUT ASIDE FROM THAT, I HAVE ANOTHER TASK TO COMPLETE.



JAPAN'S CHAO HENG DEPARTS FROM THE CAPITAL, SETTING SAIL TO CROSS THE EAST SEAS IN SOLITUDE. THE RADIANT MOON FAILS TO RETURN AND SINKS INTO THE WAVES, THE CLOUDS CAST MELANCHOLY SHADOWS OVER THE NORTHEASTERN SEAS.

-"CRYING FOR CHAO HENG" BY LI BAI





ASSASSIN'S CREED DYNASTY

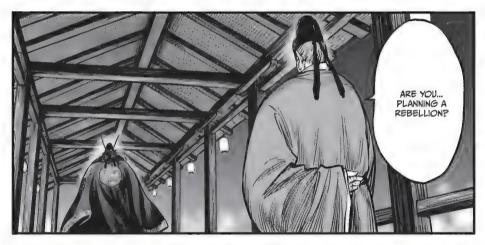
































































HE DEPARTS ONCE THE DEED IS DONE, LEAVING BEHIND NO TRACES OR CARE FOR FAME.

- "ODE TO GALLANTRY" BY LI BAI



























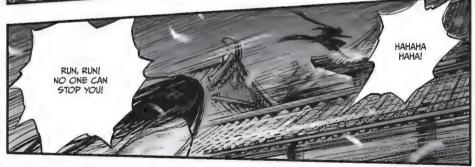












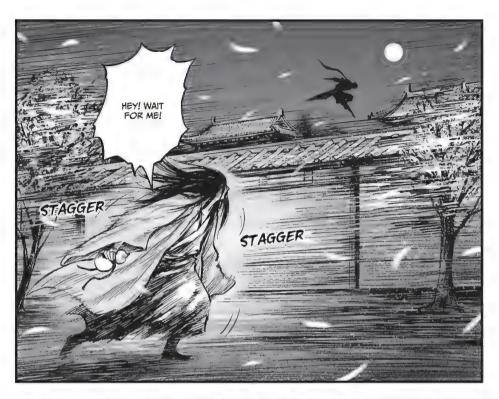














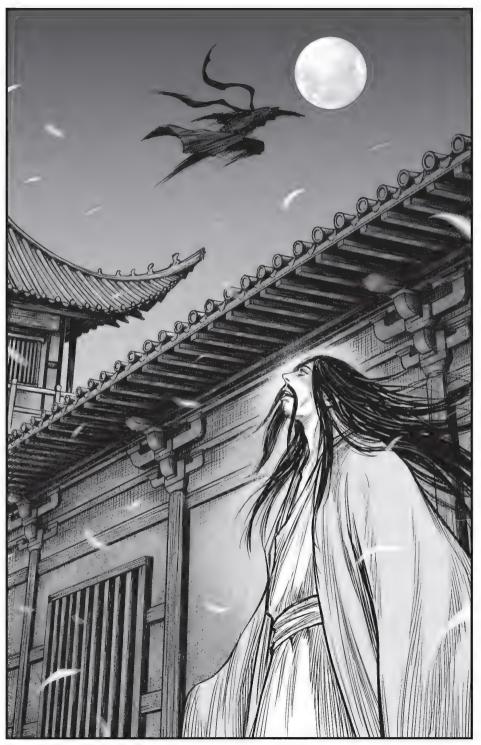


















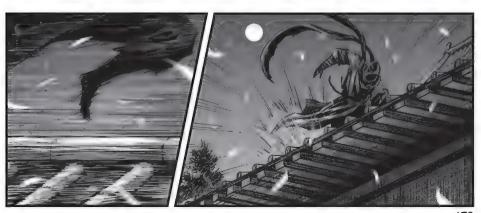
















































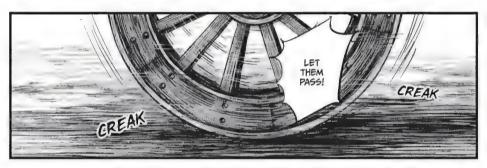








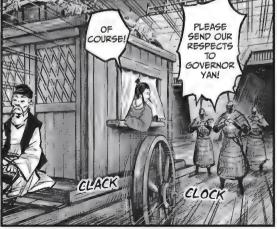


























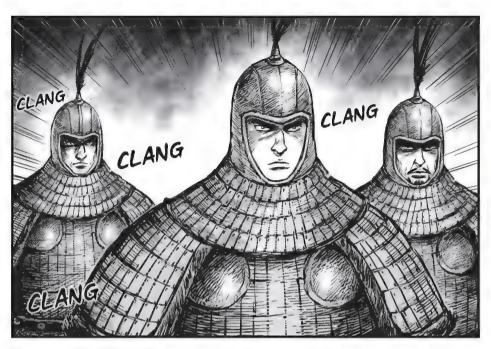
















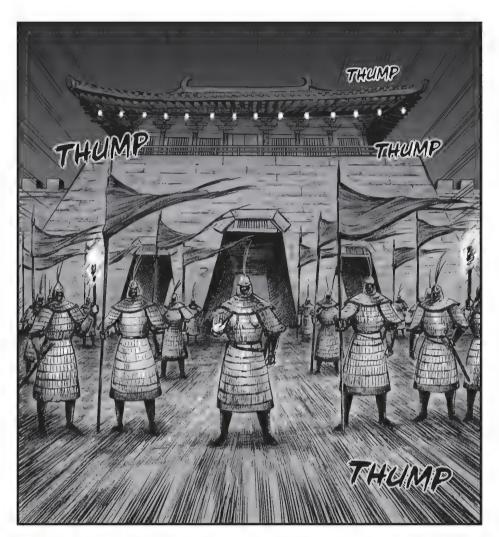


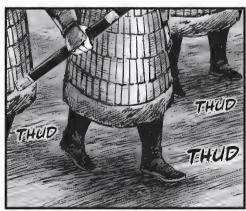
























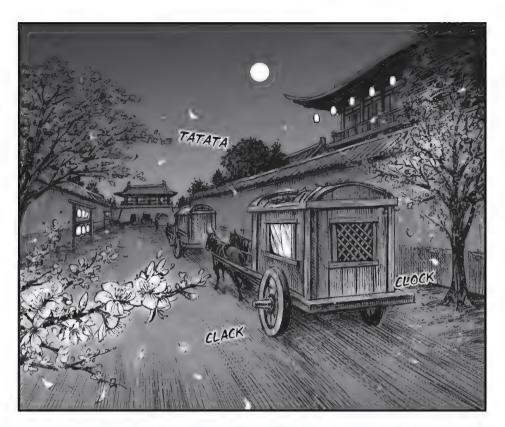




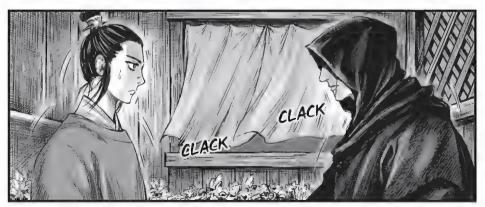


























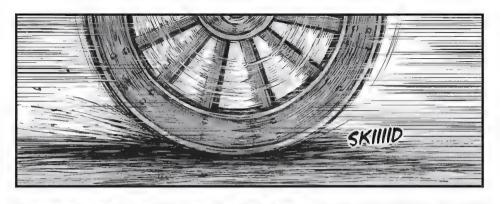










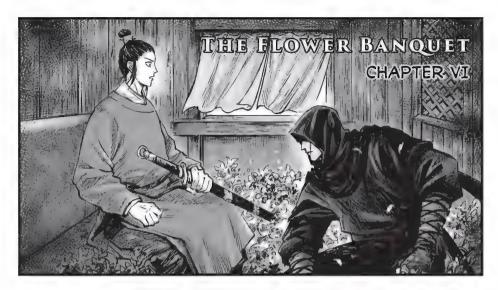




















ASSASSIN'S CREED TO Y A STY





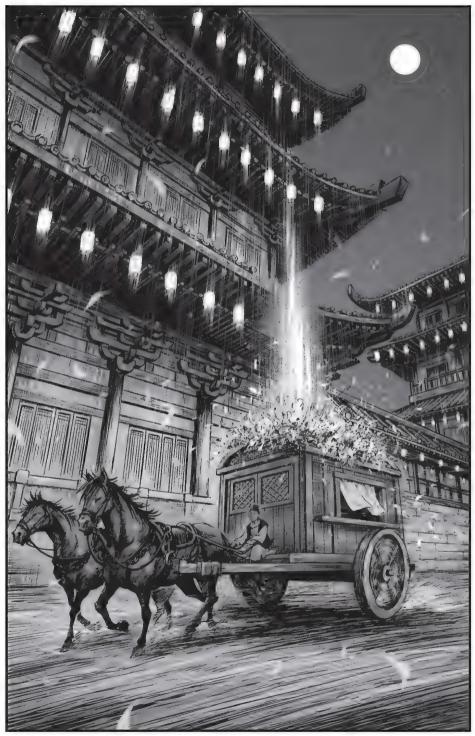










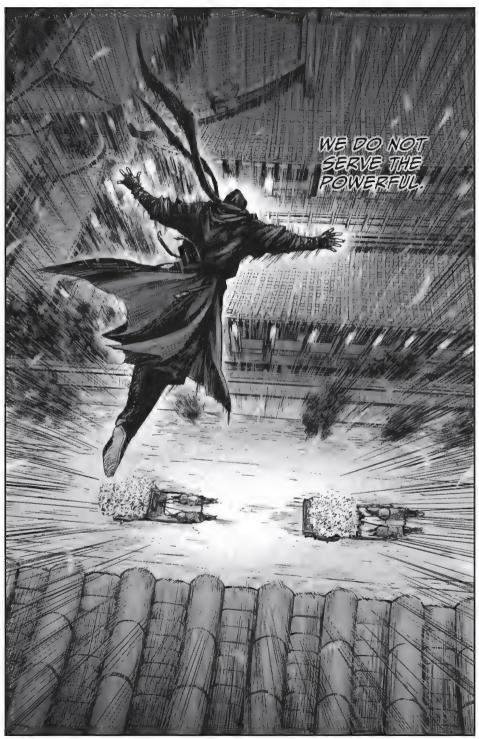


























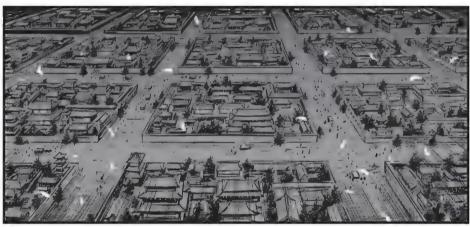
*TAMGHAJ: THE TERM USED TO REFER TO CHINA BY THOSE IN CENTRAL ASIA AND WEST OF PERSIA DURING THE TANG DYNASTY. ALSO SPELLED AS TOMGHAJ, TOHGAJ.







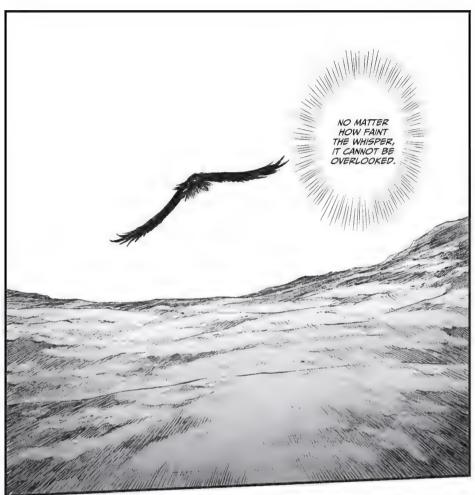


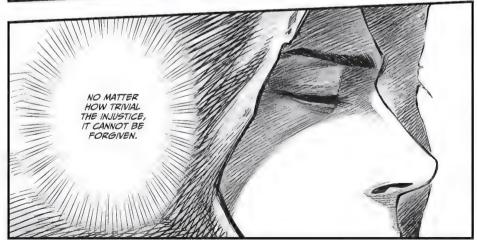






























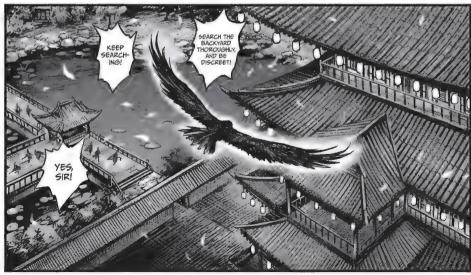








































































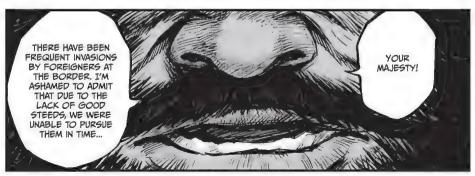
*ERFAN: KHITAN AND XI PEOPLE





























*YULIN: IMPERIAL CUARDS SERVING IN THE PALACE. THE YULIN IMPERIAL CUARDS AND LONGWU CUARDS FLANKING RIGHT AND LEFT RESPECTIVELY ARE TERMED THE "FOUR GUARDS OF BEIMEN."























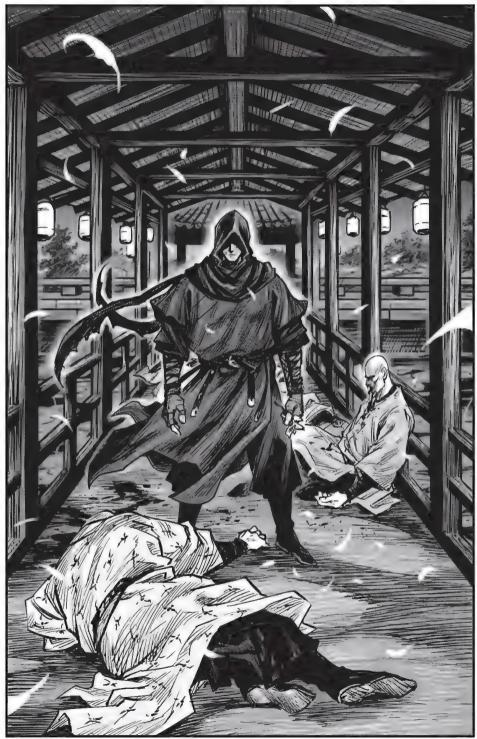


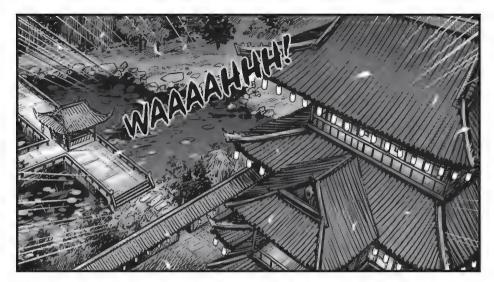




ASSASSIN'S CREED



















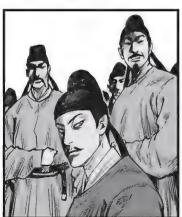






















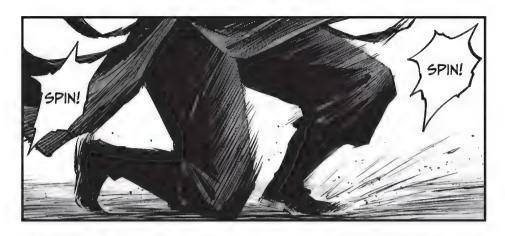












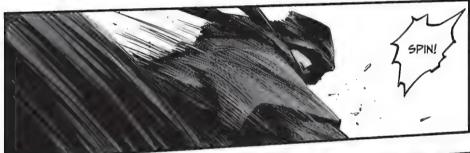


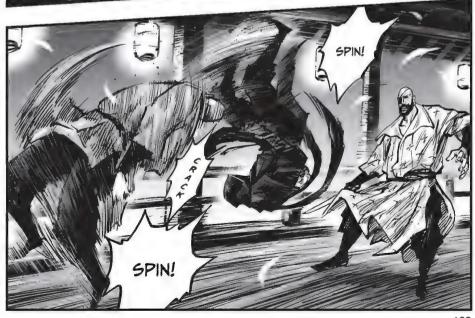






















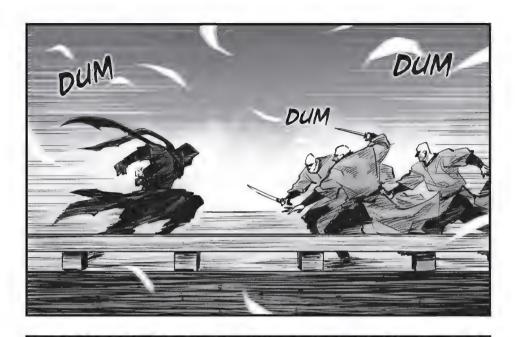
















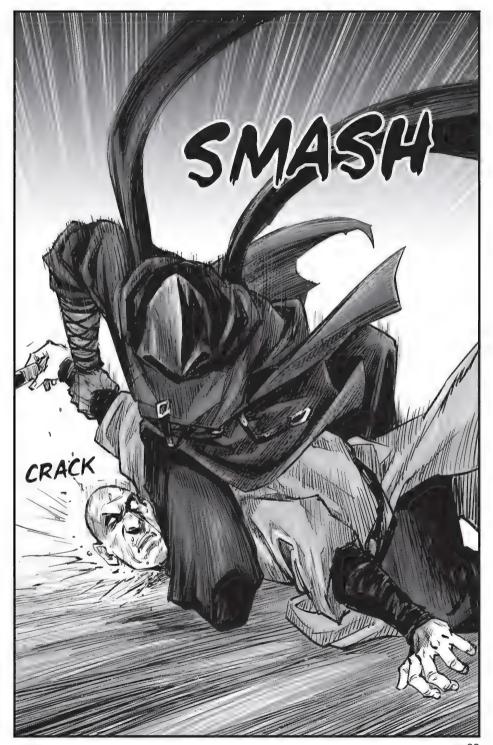






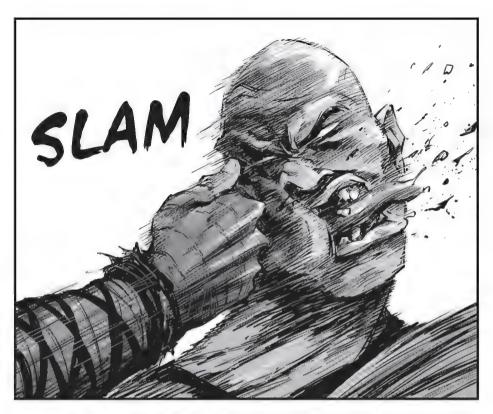












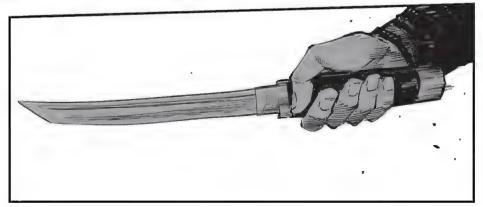












































































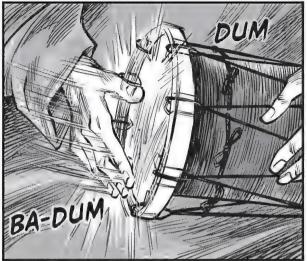




























































































































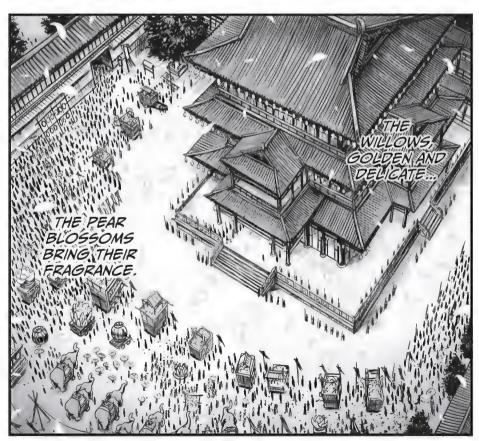
* LYRICS FOR WANDERING IN THE PALACE IN EIGHT PARTS - LI BAI

















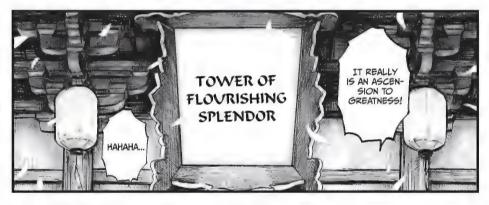


























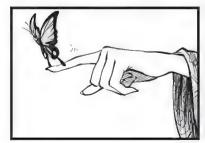






































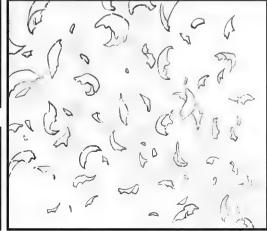






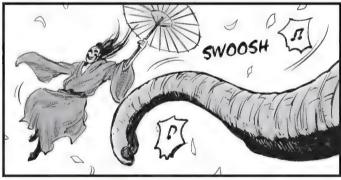




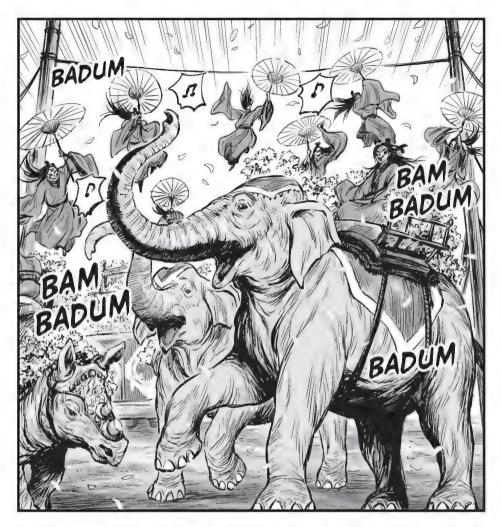






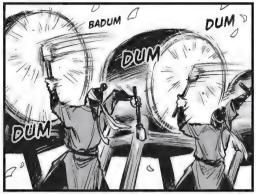


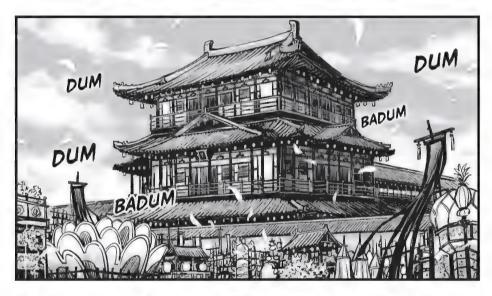














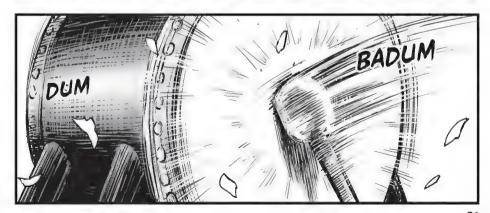














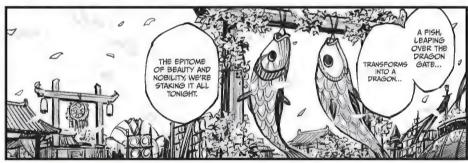
























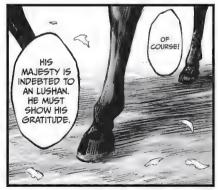










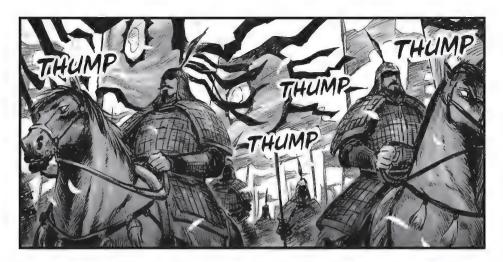










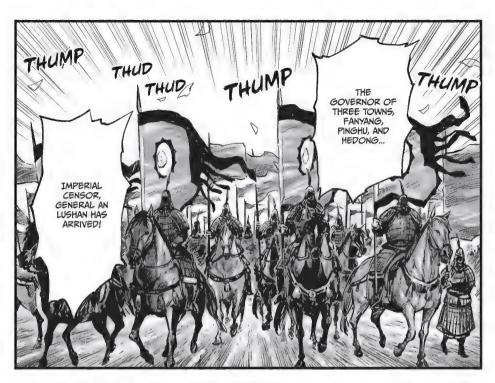
































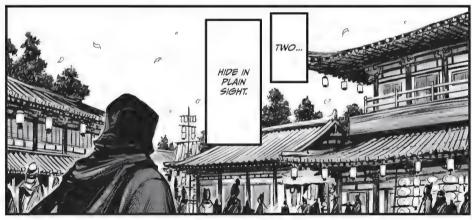
















NOTHING IS TRUE; EVERYTHING IS PERMITTED.















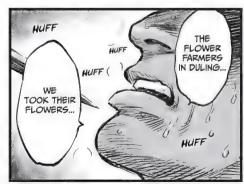










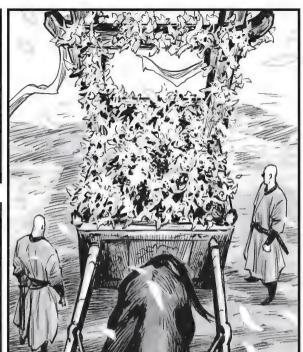
































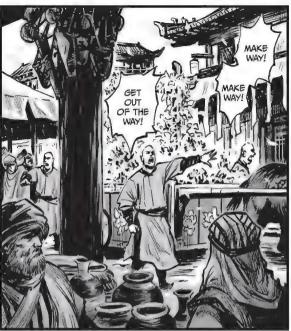














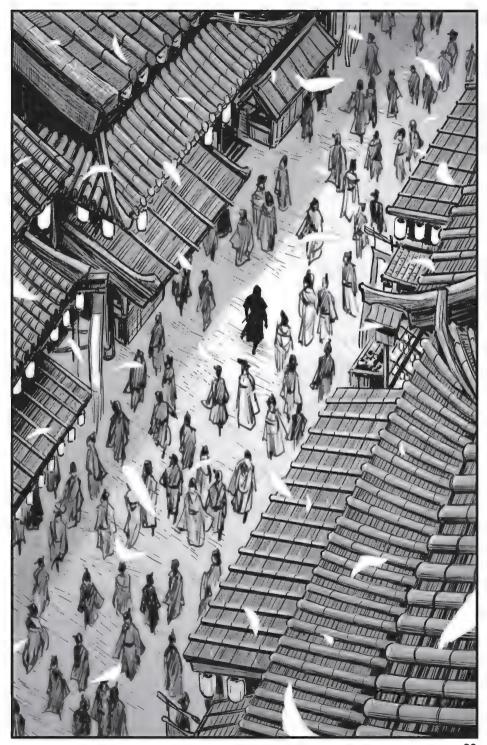


































































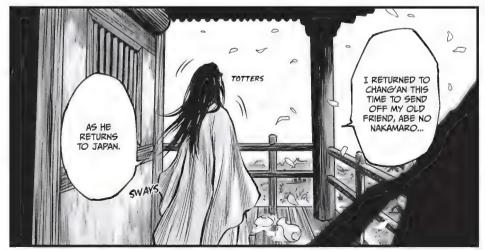






























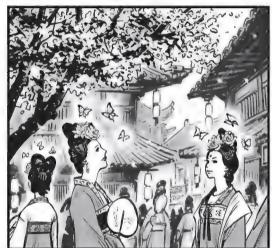


















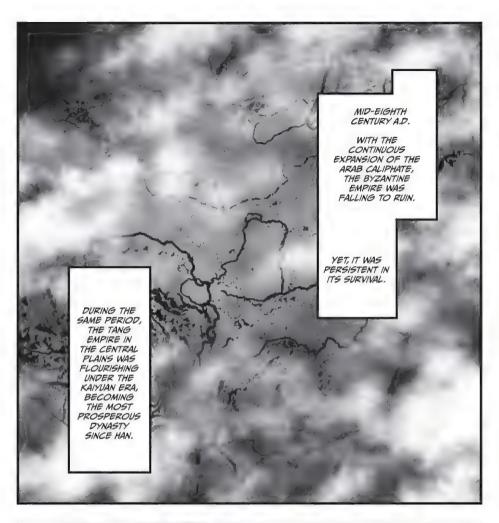


CHAPTER I















NOTHING IS TRUE; EVERYTHING IS PERMITTED.





IT IS THE THIRTEENTH YEAR OF TIANBAO IN THE TANG DYNASTY. AN ASSASSIN HAS APPEARED IN CHANG'AN...

AFTER UNIFYING THE SIX STATES, QIN SHI HUANG GREW FEARFUL OF ASSASSINS.



FROM THAT MOMENT ON, THE ASSASSINS LIVED IN THE SHADOWS...

THE EARLIEST RECORDS OF ASSASSINS IN CHINA CAN BE FOUND IN SIMA QIAN'S "RECORDS OF THE GRAND HISTORIAN."

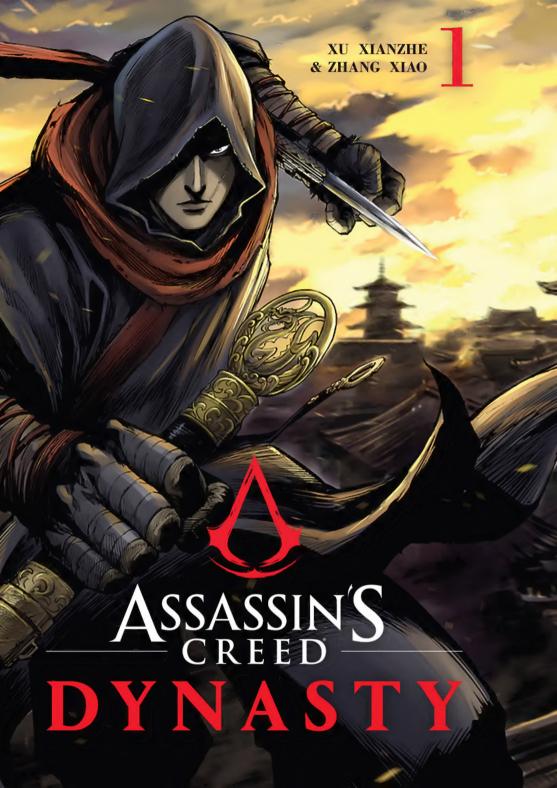
> OF THESE, THE MOST INFAMOUS FIVE WERE CAO MO, ZHUAN ZHU, NIE ZHENG, YU RANG, AND JING KE.

> > THEY WERE LATER REFERRED TO AS "THE FIVE GREAT ASSASSINS."



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